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COMMITTEE ON BUDGET

Congress of the United States House of Representatives

March 31, 2011

Kevin W. Concannon
Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Under Secretary Concannon:

I am writing to ask your office to investigate the State of Wisconsin's SNAP Program (FoodShare), and in particular, to investigate state plans to contract out various functions related to the administration of the FoodShare Program.

As a former food stamp recipient and representative of a district that includes well over 150,000 people receiving FoodShare benefits, I am acutely aware of how important this program is to families and the local economy. In Milwaukee County alone, more than 217,000 people received \$26.3 million in FoodShare benefits in February 2011 – an all-time high.

I am extremely concerned about reports that Governor Walker's Administration is moving full-speed ahead with a plan to replace public employees responsible for various aspects of income maintenance administration with private sector workers (particularly from Hewlett Packard). Hewlett Packard (HP) is already recruiting and filling multiple positions to provide advice on policy formulation, handle phone calls from beneficiaries, manage various information and technology projects, and conduct verification of client records. (In fact, a simple Internet search turned up numerous HP job openings in Monona, Wisconsin, headquarters of the state's Enrollment Services Center - <http://www.indeed.com/q-HP-I-Wisconsin-jobs.html>) Hewlett-Packard employees already communicate using State of Wisconsin e-mail addresses.

I am requesting a complete field investigation be conducted to determine the extent to which privatization has occurred or is planned to occur in Wisconsin's FoodShare Program. I want an evaluation of Governor Walker's plan to transfer SNAP to the Department of Children and Families away from Medicaid and the Department of Health Services. Will this shift result in a loss of enrollment in SNAP due to reduced program access? Is the plan to centralize and privatize the Call Center and verification processing allowable and if so under what circumstances?


I want to know how many HP employees already work for the state's Department of Health Services, what their job descriptions are, and what contracts are in place between the state and HP and for what

purpose. How much funding has the state already allocated to HP, and over what length of time are the existing contracts structured? To what extent do HP employees have access to the state's enrollment and eligibility records (i.e., CARES, CARES Worker Web, and DHS electronic case files)? Are private sector employees confirming applications?

I understand that privatization experiments involving income maintenance service failed for both customers and taxpayers in Indiana and Texas, and my belief is that the USDA can prevent harm to Wisconsin's citizens by providing much needed guidance and oversight. I urge you and your staff to review what is proposed in Governor Walker's 2011-13 Proposed Budget, and what is already happening administratively, and report your findings to me promptly.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,



GWEN MOORE
Member of Congress